



# NEWS RELEASE

## UNITED STATES AIR FORCE

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### **WHITEMAN'S SCHOOL-AGE PROGRAM BEST IN STATE**

By Senior Airman Polly Busse  
Public Affairs

**WHITEMAN AIR FORCE BASE, Mo.** – Whiteman's School-Age Program was recently selected as Missouri's Outstanding School-Age Program for 2000.

The Before- and After-School Program at the youth center, provides Whiteman's children a safe place to learn, socialize and create, is designed around children's needs.

"All of our activities are driven by what the children want to do," said Debbie Kermick, youth programs director. "We give the children a chance to make their own decisions."

The children have the opportunity to do their homework and have access to computers, but they may also have a snack, play games, create various projects or play in the gym. All areas of the youth center are monitored by individual instructors and safety guidelines are met.

Whiteman was one of six school-age programs in Missouri selected as a Showcase of Quality participant. According to a letter from Cheryl Willoughby, co-chair of 2000 MOSAC2 Showcase, they were chosen because they demonstrate the highest standards of quality. The programs chosen for the showcase demonstrated the following qualities:

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## **SCHOOL**

### **2-2-2**

- ✓ They have competent, well-trained, consistent and caring adults who build positive relationships with youth and families;
- ✓ The program provides a rich learning environment, both indoors and out, that is supportive of the whole child;
- ✓ Programs provide activity choices that reflect the interest, needs, cultural background, developmental stages and academic skills of the youth they serve;
- ✓ They have strong partnerships among families, schools and communities.

Whiteman's youth center was among the first 50 programs accredited by the National School-Age Care Alliance and among the first programs accredited in Missouri.

"The endorsers of NSACA visited our facility and looked at the program for a 24-hour period," Kermick said. "They look at all areas of the program to see if we are meeting or exceeding standards."

Children who participate in the school-age program can get involved in community service projects, learn about science, woodworking, arts and crafts, dramatic play and sewing. Along with the Before- and After-School Program, the youth center has an all-day program during the summer or when school is closed, but the base is open. Children are offered breakfast in the before-school program, a snack in the after-school program and lunch in the all-day program.

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## **SCHOOL**

### **3-3-3**

“We get the parents involved and many are very active in the program,” Kermick said.

“We have had parents come in and share recipes for cultural foods and we have board game night.

The children are never forced to do anything, they are always given options on what they want to do and if something isn’t available all the children need to do is ask.

According to Meladee Bay, chief, family member support flight, since the children get to make their own choices there are fewer behavioral problems. “Making choices is how they learn. The hours between 3 p.m. to 8 p.m. are a crucial time for children. This is when most kids get into trouble. We provide a safe, creative environment.”

The program currently has 54 children enrolled and the children have been commended by community and military officials for their efforts in a joint beautification project with Knob Noster Chamber of Commerce. At Christmas time the children adopted families through the Salvation Army and provided them with Christmas presents. More recently, the children voted to donate money earned through fund raisers to help off-set the cost of child care for Stacy, wife of Staff Sgt. Alan Butler, 325th Bomb Squadron. Butler was injured in an accident in January.

“The children are learning life skills,” Bay said. “They can become certified sewers, learn infant and child care, cooking and also participate in theater presentations.”

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## **SCHOOL**

### **4-4-4**

When the children arrive they first meet their homeroom teacher. This is for accountability because the youth center is responsible for the children in their care from the time their parents drop them off until school begins and from the time school lets out until parents pick them up. In homeroom, children are given any announcements and then they may go and do whatever they want. The youth center is open from 6:30 a.m. to 6 p.m.

“While they are here, we hope the children learn the skills they need to grow more self-sufficient,” Kermick said “We are a quality program, but we don’t do this for the recognition, we do it for the children.”



Program Assistant Rachel Colebank helps  
Brett Schmutz cut a cardboard box  
in preparation for a construction project he is beginning.